Questions Members of Parliament (MPs) might ask

Here are some questions that an MP might ask you. Remember, you are not expected to be an expert on these issues and there is nothing wrong with saying, "that's a great question! I'll get back to you with the answer" or "I'll ask World Animal Protection staff to provide me/us with an answer."

Wildlife Trade

What do you mean by wildlife trade?

Legal and illegal commerce of live wild animals and their parts and derivatives that are involved in the non-essential global commercial trade (e.g. for use as luxury goods, exotic pets, traditional medicine and entertainment) that have been bred in captivity or captured from the wild.

We do not include plants, fisheries that supply the food industry, wild animals hunted by communities for subsistence, or other wildlife trade that is deemed essential for human survival.

What do you mean by wildlife markets? Is this a wet market?

Wet markets are culturally important sources of food security. We are concerned about wildlife markets. These are markets or sections of markets that sell live wild animals (wild caught or captive bred) and their parts and derivatives.

Why is the wildlife trade an issue?

Animal welfare (high stress, high mortality rates throughout the trade from capture or captive breeding to transport)

Biodiversity decline; invasive species

Zoonotic disease risk

Removing animals from ecosystems will alter them forever and can also have an impact on climate change

Is it confirmed that COVID-19 originated at a wildlife market?

A cluster of cases in the early days of the virus were traced back to a wildlife market (Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market) in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged that the market played a significant role (if not the origins of the virus, it played, at a minimum, an amplifying role).

On March 30th 2021, the WHO published a [report](#) from a team of independent international scientists who visited Wuhan in January 2021 to investigate the origins of COVID. They found positive samples of COVID in the stalls in the wildlife section of the market. They looked at all potential pathways of transmission and concluded that the most likely pathway was from a bat through an intermediate animal host, likely sold at the wildlife market. The scientists suggested that the next research phase should be to examine the wildlife farms, including mink farms, that supplied the wildlife markets in Wuhan.

There has been increasing speculation that COVID-19 originated from a laboratory in Wuhan? What if this is true?

So far, there *has not been* substantial evidence to support this theory. In contrast there is substantial evidence to support the theory that this pandemic is related to the wildlife trade.

Dr. Anthony Fauci testified before the US Senate on May 26th, 2021 to say that he still believes the virus originated from animals but welcomes more open, transparent, and independent research.

The lab leak theory was reviewed by the WHO team of independent scientists who concluded that there was no substantial evidence to support this theory and therefore it was the least likely cause of COVID-19.

Given the severity of this pandemic and the likelihood of more, the government must act now, on the best available scientific information which shows the commercial wildlife trade is a top driver of pandemics and emerging infectious diseases and has resulted in other epidemics like SARS, HIV and many more.

Shouldn't we wait until this research concludes the origins of COVID-19?

It took 14 years to conclude that SARS came from a wildlife market. We know enough now to act. 75% of new and emerging infectious diseases originate in animals, mainly from wildlife. Other pandemics and epidemics (eg: Ebola, MERS, HIV/AIDS, H5N1) can be traced back to our exploitation of animals and nature. Scientific experts and recent global reports by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) recognize the wildlife trade as a top pandemic driver alongside intensive animal agriculture, climate change and habitat destruction.

What are some examples of the wildlife trade in Canada that we need to address?

The exotic pet trade – highest volume of wildlife; mostly legal and largely unregulated, key driver of biodiversity decline.

Fur farming - Netherlands and other European countries have or are in the process of phasing-out mink farming because of a COVID-19 outbreaks.

Mobile petting zoos and reptile expos - exist across the country and across provincial jurisdictions. High volumes of animals are exploited for these purposes and public health measures are limited.

Traditional Asian Medicine (TAM) – Canadian bears are being poached from the wild here to supply the demand for bear gallbladders used TAM. While largely illegal, inconsistent provincial regulations provide loopholes. TAM products containing wild animals are sold and consumed in Canada.

What are we asking for?

Canada can do its part by:

- urging an immediate and permanent closure of wildlife markets at the G20.
- committing at the G20 to end the international trade of wild animals and wild animal products that contribute to zoonotic disease risks and supporting global mechanisms to implement the ban.
- curbing the import and domestic trade of wild animals and wild animal products that contribute to zoonotic disease risk in Canada.

What can Canada do domestically?

- Establish and adequately fund a comprehensive and transparent system for tracking and monitoring the import, export and sales of live wild animals and their parts and derivatives in Canada.

Explanation: we need to start with the data to better understand the depth of the problem and to inform meaningful regulations to address it. When animals cross our border or are bred in captivity in Canada, there is no tracking. In fact, World Animal Protection had to commission a public survey to understand how many wild animals are kept in Canadian homes as pets (1.4 million!) because data is not available.

- Work with provinces and territories to mitigate inherent risks to public health, animal welfare and our natural environment by harmonizing and strengthening regulations to drastically reduce captive breeding, transport and the physical and online trade in wild animals. Adopting a precautionary approach.

Explanation: Patchwork of inadequate provincial and municipal regulations exist across the country; not sufficient to mitigate the many risks, not only to public health but also to public safety, animal welfare and the native environment.

- Strengthen enforcement of both the legal and illegal wildlife trade, through better coordination across agencies and federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions and increased funding and resources.

Explanation: Canada's wildlife enforcement directorate has 75 field officers nationwide who are challenged by inadequate laws, deterrents, and resources to crack down on the growing illegal wildlife trade. As other country's wildlife become endangered, ours are more at risk; while the trade is increasing, the enforcement budget has not increased accordingly.

What is the volume and value of the global wildlife trade?

It is difficult to quantify the volume and value of the trade because of fragmented and inadequate record keeping of the legal trade and the covert nature of the illegal trade. But this is a multibillion-dollar global industry.

Globally - The legal trade is estimated to be worth roughly $300 billion. And The illegal trade is estimated to be worth $7 to $23 billion annually and is the fourth largest illegal industry worldwide, just after human, weapons, and drug trafficking.

The volume of the trade has quadrupled since 1975.

Aren't wild animals protected under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)?

CITES only accounts for a fraction of the species that are traded. CITES was not designed to regulate trade in non-endangered species or in species who pose the greatest risk to transmit diseases. It does for example not regulate the horseshoe bat which has been cited as possible source of COVID19. CITES currently protects commercial interests rather than protecting wildlife. Pangolins are the perfect example of why CITES is failing; they have highest level of protection but are still the world's most trafficked animal.

According to CITES trade data, 547,559 live wild animals were imported into Canada between 2014-2019. But this is just a fraction of the animals that were imported during this time period. Most wildlife species are not

listed by CITES. According to the CITES website, approximately 5,950 species are listed, which is only a fraction of the number of wildlife species that exist[1] (approximately 8.6% of all species we know off).

How does the wildlife trade impact biodiversity loss?

The trade in wildlife for exotic pets and other luxury products is one of the most prominent drivers of vertebrate species extinction globally. In addition to overhunting, these animals are traded to other regions of the globe where they are becoming invasive often outcompeting native species. They can also introduce new pathogens that infect native species. For eg; the wildlife trade has contributed to the spread of a fungus (Chytrid) that has caused the decline or extinction of more than 500 amphibian species across 6 continents. Examples of invasive species problems resulting from the wildlife trade include Burmese pythons in South Florida, Red lionfish in Caribbean Sea and Red eared sliders in Canada.

A large proportion of species are currently threatened with extinction and it has been estimated that we have lost 60% of wild animals over the past 40 years.

Why are you advocating for action to be taken at the G20 to curb the commercial wildlife trade?

Unlike other multilateral organizations, the 20 largest economies have the power and influence to move the world into action. Last year, progress was made at the G20. The G20 Agriculture Ministers recommended a list be developed to identify wildlife species and trade conditions that present significant zoonotic disease risks and guidelines for mitigating them.

Won't a ban just drive the trade underground?

To successfully end the commercial global wildlife trade, efforts should also focus on reducing consumer demand for wildlife ownership and consumption and increasing enforcement to prevent illegal markets thriving.

The legal trade is not necessarily well regulated, ethical, or sustainable. Additionally, fraudulent activity, inconsistent and inadequate record keeping, and misidentification and mislabelling of species have been attributed to the legal trade of wild animals. For example, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and CITES lists are by far the most, commonly used data sources regarding wildlife trade analysis, yet one study found thousands of traded species omitted by each organisation's trade database in comparison with the other. Substantial discrepancies have also been documented between CITES and customs data records, reinforcing reporting uncertainties. Legal trade can also provide loopholes and 'cover' for illegal trade activities, and there are still animal welfare and potential public health problems associated with the legal trade.

Wouldn't it be better to improve regulations to reduce health risks of the trade vs ban the trade?

The large volumes of wildlife imported render it challenging and costly for enforcement officers to effectively screen all individuals.

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[1] Number of estimated animal species: 33,600 fish species, 11,050 reptile species, 10,000 bird species, 8,1000 amphibian species, 6,400 mammal species. Total 69,150

Asymptomatic carriers and unidentified emerging pathogens can evade even highly sophisticated disease surveillance. Biosecurity measures like quarantining animals have failed. For eg; a parasite spread to the UK via imported beavers from Germany despite quarantining the animals for 6 months.

It is extremely difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal wildlife and its products. Extensive training and resources are required by customs, border control and other inspection and loading points to recognise fraudulent shipments. By only selectively picking what commercial wildlife trade can continue, extra law enforcement capacity, technology and manpower would be needed which simply does not exist in many contexts.

Won't a global ban have negative impacts on livelihoods of vulnerable communities?

The impact of the current and future global pandemics can have far greater negative impacts on these communities and the global economy.

Local communities do not typically reap the benefits of the lucrative wildlife trade. The majority of profit is often seen further down the trade chain. Also access to wildlife that is essential to human survival is jeopardized by the overexploitation of wildlife to supply the trade in non-essential, luxury products.

Governments should support any vulnerable wildlife-trade depended communities in transitioning to more resilient and sustainable livelihoods and support education campaigns that help shift consumer demand from wildlife to safer and more ethical alternatives.

Animal agriculture

Why are so many antibiotics used in animal farming?

Antibiotics are used for both growth promotion (though less so now in Canada) and prophylactically (to prevent illness) in animals that are kept in intensive, low welfare conditions. They are given to compensate for the poor welfare conditions that make animals stressed and vulnerable to illness and infection.

High consumption of animal foods (meat, dairy, fish/seafood and eggs) drives the industrialization and intensification of animal agriculture.

How many antibiotics are used in animal farming in Canada?

Approximately 78% of antibiotics used in Canada are given to farm animals.

What regulations exist in Canada to control the use of antibiotics?

Canada requires farmers have a veterinary prescription to obtain antibiotics. However, surveillance reports show that this is not enough to reduce or eliminate their use. Veterinarians work closely with industry producers within a system that has been set up to require antibiotics to prevent illness. Stricter regulatory changes to antibiotic use and farming systems are needed to change existing practices.

How does giving antibiotics to farm animals contribute to antibiotic resistance ('superbugs')?

When given in large quantities over time, bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics. Antibiotics fed to farm animals along with the resistant genes can make their way to humans via food, the environment (when manure enters the ground water or public waterways), and when animal manure is used for crop fertilizer.

What would make it possible to phase-out the prophylactic use of antibiotics in animal farming?

Keeping animals in higher welfare conditions (improved husbandry & management practices, nutrition, more space and enrichment) would eliminate the necessity for the prophylactic use of antibiotics.

To make higher welfare systems possible, a global reduction of animal protein consumption is needed. Intensive production systems are driven by the demand and consumption of huge amounts of animal foods. Moving to sustainable, high welfare systems would require more land. To do this within the earth's limited capacity, a reduction in the consumption of animals is needed.

What else can government do to phase-out intensive animal agriculture?

Canada has shown progress in the development of its latest Food Guide which emphasizes plant-based foods for nutrition, health, and environment, over animal-based foods but it needs to focus on promoting the guide to Canadians. Actions Canada can take to end industrial animal agriculture:

- Implement national education campaigns to promote the Canada Food Guide
- Financially support plant-based business initiatives/ventures.
- Provide financial or policy incentives to support farmers' transition to higher welfare, sustainable farming systems.
- Re-direct subsidies away from conventional animal agriculture to sustainable, high welfare initiatives.
- Integrate policies to address intensive animal agriculture into its climate change action plan